## AMENDMENTS

**Listing of Claims**

The following listing of claims replaces all previous listings or version thereof:

1. (Previously presented) An isolated polynucleotide encoding a striated muscle activator of Rho signaling (STARS) polypeptide.

2. (Previously presented) The isolated polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein the STARS polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2, 4, 6, 8 or 10.

3. (Original) The polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein said polynucleotide has a nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or a complement thereof.

4. (Original) The polynucleotide of claim 2, wherein said polynucleotide further comprises a promoter operable in eukaryotic cells.

5. (Previously presented) The polynucleotide of claim 4, wherein said promoter is selected from the group consisting of hsp68, SV40, Cytomegalovirus (CMV), MKC, $GAL4_{UAS}$, Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) and β-actin.

6. (Original) The polynucleotide of claim 5, wherein said promoter is a tissue specific promoter.

7. (Previously presented) An isolated and purified nucleic acid of 15 to about 2000 base pairs comprising at least 15 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

8. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 20 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

9. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 25 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

10. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 30 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

11. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 50 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

12. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 100 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9 or the complement thereof.

13. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 150 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

14. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 250 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

15. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 500 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

16. (Original) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 1000 contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

17. (Currently amended) The nucleic acid of claim 7, comprising 1146~~2000~~ contiguous base pairs of SEQ ID NO:1, 2, 5, 7 or 9, or the complement thereof.

18-23. (Canceled)

24. (Previously presented) An expression construct comprising a polynucleotide encoding a STARS polypeptide operably linked to a regulatory sequence.

25. (Previously presented) The expression construct of claim 24, wherein the polynucleotide encodes a STARS polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2, 4, 6, 8 or 10.

26. (Original) The expression construct of claim 25, wherein said regulatory sequence is a tissue specific promoter.

27. (Original) The expression construct of claim 26, wherein said promoter is a muscle specific promoter.

28. (Original) The expression construct of claim 27, wherein said muscle specific promoter is selected from the group consisting of myosin light chain-2 promoter, α actin promoter, troponin 1 promoter, $Na^+/Ca^{2+}$ exchanger promoter, dystrophin promoter, creatine kinase promoter, α7 integrin promoter, brain natriuretic peptide promoter, αB-crystallin/small heat shock protein promoter, α myosin heavy chain promoter and atrial natriuretic factor promoter.

29. (Original) The expression construct of claim 25, wherein said promoter is an inducible promoter.

30. (Original) The expression construct of claim 25, wherein said expression construct is contained in a viral vector.

31. (Original) The expression construct of claim 25, wherein said viral vector is selected from the group consisting of a retroviral vector, an adenoviral vector, and adeno-associated viral vector, a vaccinia viral vector, a herpesviral vector, a polyoma viral construct or a Sindbis viral vector.

32. (Original) The expression construct of claim 24, wherein said expression construct comprises a polyadenylation signal.

33. (Original) The expression construct of claim 24, wherein said expression construct comprises a second polynucleotide encoding a second polypeptide.

34. (Original) The expression construct of claim 32, wherein said second polynucleotide is under the control of a second regulatory sequence.

35-60. (Canceled)

61. (Previously presented) A method of producing a STARS polypeptide in a cell comprising:

(a) transforming a cell with an expression cassette comprising a nucleic acid encoding STARS under the control of a promoter active in said cell;
(b) culturing said cell under conditions suitable for expression of STARS.

62. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein said cell is a cardiomyocyte or a fibroblast, such as a cardiac fibroblast.

63. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein said cell is located in an animal.

64. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein transforming comprises infection with a viral vector.

65. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein transforming comprises contacting of said cell with a liposome comprising said expression cassette.

66. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein transforming comprises electroporation, calcium phosphate precipitation or protoplast fusion.

67. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein said cell is a prokaryotic cell.

68. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein said cell is a eukaryotic cell.

69. (Previously presented) The method of claim 61, further comprising the step of purifying said STARS polypeptide away from other cellular components.

70-105. (Canceled)